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ADEQ Director Owens Announces \$136,900 Grant to Improve Water Quality in Graham County

PHOENIX (Aug. 14, 2008) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Steve Owens announced today that ADEQ has awarded a \$136,900 grant to Noland Ranch, northeast of Safford in Graham County, to improve water quality in the Bonita Creek and Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area.

The funds will be used to rebuild an old 7.4-mile fence, which will prevent about 200 cattle from disturbing the soil in the Gila River and Bonita Creek sections of the about 36-square-mile area.

The disturbance of riparian areas by cattle drinking from the water source loosens the soil. That increases the sedimentation in the immediate area and down river and can carry nutrients, fertilizer and micro-organisms into the water.

The site is in northeastern Graham County near the border with Greenlee County.

“We are pleased to support this effort to protect this precious water body in this very important part of our state,” Director Owens said. “This is another example of how we have been working with local ranchers and others to protect critical riparian areas from sediment pollution.”

The grant, which also includes public education about protecting watersheds, is funded with federal dollars provided to ADEQ under the Clean Water Act.